



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

August 10, 2005

# News Release

## **MEMBERS OF DRIVER'S LICENSE FRAUD RING PLEAD GUILTY**

### *Transported individuals to Michigan for Driver's Licenses*

DETROIT — Two members of a driver's license fraud ring pleaded guilty to transporting illegal aliens for the sole purpose of fraudulently obtaining Michigan driver's licenses using counterfeit foreign identity documents, announced U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy, Eastern District of Michigan, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent in Charge Brian M. Moskowitz.

Fabiano Caneva, 26, and Nelson Domingues, 41, both Brazilian citizens, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Victoria A. Roberts. Caneva resided in Cliffside Park, N.J., at the time of his arrest. Domingues, of Detroit, Mich., has been a permanent resident in the United States ("green card" holder) for about 19 years.

Both defendants pleaded to the following charges and face the following maximum sentences:

- Count 1: Transport of Aliens within the U.S. for Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain, Aiding and Abetting – 10 years and / or \$250,000 fine
- Count 2: Conspiracy to Transport Aliens within the U.S. for Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain – 10 years and / or \$250,000
- Count 3: Conspiracy to Transfer False Identification Documents – 15 years and / or \$250,000
- Count 4: Transfer of False Identification Documents – 15 years and / or \$250,000
- Count 5: Mail Fraud, Aiding and Abetting – 20 years and / or \$250,000
- Count 13: Forfeiture of Property Constituting or Deriving from Proceeds of Crime

In addition, Caneva also pleaded guilty to the following counts:

- Count 7: Possession of Five or More False Identification Documents with Intent to Unlawfully Use and Transfer, Aiding and Abetting – 3 years and / or \$250,000
- Count 8: Possession of Document Making Implements with Intent to Use in the Production of False Identification Documents, Aiding and Abetting – 15 years and / or \$250,000

Domingues also pleaded guilty to Count 6: Conspiracy to Smuggle Aliens into the United States – 10 years and / or \$250,000.

The facts revealed at today's plea hearing showed that on or about June 2003, to on or about June 24, 2004, the defendants were involved in an on-going criminal enterprise where illegal aliens, primarily from the East Coast of the United States, would be transported to the State of Michigan for the sole purpose of fraudulently obtaining a Michigan Driver's License.

They chose the State of Michigan as their preferred destination since it does not require proof of lawful status in the United States, a social security card, or actual residency in the State of Michigan.

For a fee, Fabiano Caneva, Hugo De Souza Faria, Fabiano Cesilla, Cleverson De Oliveria, and Nelson A. Domingues provided illegal aliens (their "customers") with fraudulent identity documents from foreign countries, which were then used as documents by each customer when applying for a Michigan Driver's License. These documents included counterfeit driver's licenses, birth certificates, and marriage certificates from: Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Uruguay and Portugal.

Fabiano Caneva, Hugo De Souza Faria, Fabiano Cesilla, Cleverson De Oliveria, and Nelson Domingues provided their customers with residential addresses in the Eastern Michigan to use on their driver's license applications. As a result of the customers' applications, officially issued Michigan driver's licenses were mailed to addresses in the Eastern District of Michigan over which Fabiano Caneva, Hugo De Souza Faria, Fabiano Cesilla, Cleverson De Oliveria, and Nelson Domingues had dominion and control. Often, tens of licenses would be sent to the same address. Once the licenses arrived, members of the conspiracy would take them to their customers who had returned to the East Coast of the United States.

Caneva began his involvement in the above-described conduct about June 2003. At that time Cleverson De Oliveria was in charge. De Oliveria basically "owned" the "business." Caneva and Hugo De Souza Faria worked as drivers for De Oliveria, transporting illegal alien customers to the Eastern Michigan where they would fraudulently obtain their Michigan driver's licenses. Often, the documents submitted with the license application were counterfeit foreign identity documents that were provided by Fabiano Cesilla who utilized his computer skills to make the fraudulent documents.

On or about January 2004, Cleverson De Oliveria sold the criminal enterprise, or "business," to Fabiano Caneva and Hugo De Souza Faria. Defendant Caneva managed the illicit proceeds from the operation and kept detailed records. Caneva and De Souza Faria continued driving customers to Michigan where they personally assisted the customers in completing an application for a Michigan Driver's Licenses. Fabiano Cesilla continued to provide counterfeit foreign identity documents to Caneva and Faria, which he would manufacture on various computers. Domingues continued providing addresses for "customers" to use in the scheme. At times, Domingues also provided a physical location for the manufacturing of the counterfeit foreign identity documents that were used as predicated documents to obtain the Michigan driver's licenses.

During the course of the conspiracy, Caneva, Domingues, and Faria agreed to begin smuggling persons from South America, through Mexico, and into the United States. Once in the United States, Caneva, Domingues and Faria planned to bring their "customers" to Michigan to obtain a driver's license. In essence, they sought to provide illegal aliens "one-stop shopping" for being smuggled into the United States and unlawfully obtaining a driver's license once here. Domingues traveled to Mexico to make arrangements to expand the business in this manner.

Sentencing for Caneva and Domingues is scheduled for Dec. 4 before the Honorable Victoria A. Roberts. The sentence to be imposed will be in accord with relevant statutory factors, the Sentencing Guidelines, and the criminal history, if any, of the defendants.

In addition, both defendants face deportation to Brazil by ICE after serving their sentence.

U.S. Attorney Murphy commended the outstanding cooperation and teamwork in Southeast Michigan and Newark, N.J., among the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. "Without their dedication and commitment, these defendants would never have been brought to justice," said Murphy.

"We place a high priority on disrupting criminal groups involved in the production and trafficking of counterfeit identity documents," said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Detroit. "Aggressively investigating and prosecuting document fraud cases is essential due to the serious potential for their abuse by criminals and others."

Assistant U.S. Attorney John Freeman is prosecuting the case.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*